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Donovan Reports Some Progress With Castro on Prisoner Release

By Ralph Chapman
Special Tribune New Service
NEW YORK, Oct. 6 (AP)—B. Donovan, negotiating the release of 1113 Cubans captured in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion last year, said today that there has been some progress but no final agreement with the Castro regime.

Reached in Havana by telephone, Donovan branded stories that the men have been freed and will be flown to this country as "not true." The rumor gained wide acceptance among Cuban refugees in Miami and elsewhere but the New York lawyer attributed this to the "wave of optimism" which always attends negotiations of this kind.

"I do feel that progress has been made," he said, "but no final agreement has been reached. . . I hope to remain here until I can bring them (the prisoners) out with me."

(A National Broadcasting Company correspondent in Havana reported that agreement had been reached in principle but that details still had to be worked out.)

Donovan talked with Premier Fidel Castro for more than seven hours on Friday at the Havana home of Berta Barreto, whose son is one of the prisoners. Mrs. Barreto has been acting as liaison be-

tween the Castro Government and the Cuban Families Committee for Liberation of Prisoners of War with headquarters in New York. Donovan represents the Committee as its general counsel.

Another meeting between the two is scheduled for Monday at the same place.

Asked today whether Cuban officials were "cooperative," he said only that Castro

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and others to whom he has talked were "very courteous."

Soon after the invasion was squashed in April, 1961, the Castro government announced that it would release the prisoners upon payment of "indemnity" in the amount of \$62 million in cash. Later, a group of 60 sick and wounded were released and permitted to come to the United States to help raise the money.

Each prisoner has an individual price tag and the families of a few have taken advantage of this fact to ransom loved ones. Prices as high as \$100,000 have been paid.

Donovan, who arranged the release of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers in exchange for Rudolph Ivanovich Abel, convicted Soviet spy, is trying to get Castro to accept goods in

stead of cash. The Cuban leader was willing at one time to accept tractors and other machinery but this was denied him. What is now being offered is food, also medicines and other similar items known to be in short supply.

Large amounts of such materials have been pledged by a variety of groups and individuals in this country but it is understood that these pledges are far from the equivalent of the cash demands. It is believed that Donovan has been dickering also for a smaller total payment and some sort of installment arrangement.

He first went to Havana at the beginning of last month and remained four days. Upon his return at that time, after a four-and-a-half-hour talk with Castro, he expressed guarded optimism.

He left New York for the current series of talks on Tuesday, despite the fact that he was suffering severely from bursitis in his right shoulder.

Donovan, who is Democratic candidate for U. S. Senator from New York, said he had first noticed the trouble while campaigning a few days before his departure. By the time he arrived in Havana, the pain was so acute that he could not resume his negotiations at once.